# Corte Corbata

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# Corte Corbata

by The_German_Grim_Reaper

Summary

corte corbata, noun: a form of execution in which the victim’s throat is cut open from ear to ear and the tongue pulled down and out the wound as a means of invoking fear in others. Also known as a Columbian Necktie. See also: what Will Graham did to Freddie Lounds.

or: when Freddie Lounds breaks into Will's barn, he doesn't call Jack Crawford. Instead, he finds himself calling Hannibal to help him deal with the body. This changes everything.

# The Barn

Will peered out the window, unsurprised to see the distinctive orange hair partially-hidden under a dark beanie. He'd suspected it was Freddie as soon as he heard the car, his suspicions all but confirmed the moment he heard the doorknob rattle. Still, it was one thing to think it and another to actually know; Freddie Lounds was on his property, and she was going to find the barn.

Or rather, what was *in* the barn. The doors on the house were dead-bolted, but the lock on the barn was flimsy at best. Someone with a tendency to sneak onto active crime scenes would surely know how to pick it, and someone with Freddie Lounds's curiosity wouldn't be able to resist the temptation. Anything to get a scoop, especially since- as Alana had warned him the previous night as dinner- she was beginning to suspect that Will and Hannibal were more than what they appeared.

He watched dispassionately as she crept over to the barn door and fiddled with the lock. Once she'd gotten it open- sparing one last glance over her shoulder to see if she was being followed- she stepped inside. Will waited one heartbeat to make sure she wasn't coming back out, then grabbed a knife from the kitchen counter and followed her.

It was snowing outside, the air crisp and clear. There was a clear set of footprints in the snow showing where Freddie had gone, but they would be covered up soon enough. It wasn't supposed to stop snowing for hours, after all.

When he entered the barn, Freddie was standing over the freezer. The door was open, propped up with one arm while the other dug through its contents. Will already knew what she would find, but he found himself oddly relaxed about it. It didn't matter what Freddie found out; she wouldn't be leaving this barn alive.

It wasn't the smartest choice of action, he knew. He could knock her out, call Jack, get her into protective custody. Pretend to have killed her, but keep his hands clean of the actual crime. And perhaps, in another life, he would have done so; but this was here and now, and Will had no intentions of letting her live.

He moved carefully around the room, letting the plastic sheeting conceal him from his prey. He came to a stop when he was on the opposite side of the freezer, still standing between her and the door. He could see the terror in her eyes when she uncovered Randall Tier's jawbone among the wrapped-up meats, flinging it back into the freezer in disgust and shutting the door heavily.

Her eyes met Will's, and her breath stopped.

He could understand it, now, why Hannibal liked to kill them. Yes, they were pigs, and yes, a part of it was about making art. But Hannibal liked to drag it out, liked to cut them open and pull out their organs one by one as they were still alive. Will had never considered himself a sadist, but right now… seeing the fear in her eyes, he couldn't deny that something about it felt good.

"There's a perfectly reasonable explanation for all this." He told her calmly, his voice level. She was fumbling with her bag, pulling out a handgun and aiming it at him. He couldn't help but scoff; one gun wouldn't be enough to save her, especially with how much her hands trembled as she held it.

"I don't want to hear it." Her voice, too, trembled as she spoke. "Move away from the door."

"Hey." He said, raising his hands in an imitation of surrender. "It's okay." The kitchen knife was gone now, hidden away in his coat pocket. For now, he took a step forward with empty hands.

"Don't come any closer." She insisted, still not shooting the gun.

"That body in the freezer?" He said, taking another two steps as he spoke. "He tried to kill me. It was self-defense."

"Not when you *butchered* him." She argued, raising the gun a bit higher. Will stilled; another step closer, and she might actually find the guts to shoot him.

“No.” He agreed. “That part, see, was officially sanctioned by the FBI. I have to win the Ripper’s trust if I want to catch him, right?”

She swallowed, clearly unsure of whether to believe him. “They wouldn’t. And how would the Ripper know about this, unless- the body at the museum.”

Will allowed a small smile to flit across his face at the recognition of his work. “Can I tell you a secret, Miss Lounds?”

The gun in her hands trembled violently, but she didn’t pull the trigger.

“Jack Crawford thinks I’m undercover. That I did what I did to catch a serial killer. But you know what I’m starting to realize?” He leaned in closer, taking satisfaction in the way she flinched away from him. “*I don’t want him to be caught.*”

And with that, he lunged. The gun in her hands jerked wildly as she pulled the trigger, bullet sailing harmlessly over his shoulder and embedding itself in the wooden wall of the barn. At the same time, Will’s kitchen knife slid under the sleeve of her jacket, across her wrist, severing the tendons and releasing a heavy flow of blood. She stumbled, and he caught her.

“Hey, hey.” He reassured her, pinning her hands to the ground. "Shh." He slid the knife across her other wrist, rendering both of her hands functionally useless, before letting her go. The gun had clattered to the ground in their altercation, and she was quickly growing too weak from blood loss to fight back. He didn’t have much time.

If Hannibal were here, he would probably save her. Staunch the bleeding, bandage her up, and then take his time to torture her once she’d recovered. But Will was not Hannibal, and he couldn’t deny the wave of bloodlust that was coming over him. The wounds on her wrists would be enough to kill her, but not enough to sate Will’s thirst. Breathing heavily, he brought the knife up to her throat, pausing to see her eyes widen in sheer terror just before he sunk the blade into her flesh. As her shuddering movements beneath him slowed, he reached one hand into the wound he’d created and wrapped his fingers around her tongue. A columbian necktie seemed a fitting end to the intolerable journalist; he only hoped that Hannibal would feel the same.

He would need to act quickly, to make sure no one traced her disappearance to him. First was her cell phone. He dug around in her pockets for a moment before he found it, double checking that she hadn't phoned anyone since she'd arrived. There were no calls or texts, but he did find several incriminating photos from the inside of his barn; no matter, since she hadn't had time to do anything with them. He took the gun from the ground, aiming it at the phone before pulling the trigger. That ought to do it.

Then there was the matter of her car. He couldn't move it, not without risk. Even if he put on gloves and covered the inside with plastic, there was always the chance he would leave a fingerprint or a hair or some other kind of forensic evidence. Although…

With a sigh, Will wiped his hands off and pulled out his own phone. He didn't need to look at it, already knowing the number he would call.

Hannibal picked up on the first ring. "Will?" He greeted him calmly, sounding rather pleased by the unexpected call.

"Dr Lecter." Will replied, glancing down at Freddie's body and then looking away. "I seem to have… run into a bit of a problem up here in Wolf Trap."

"Oh?" That pleased note in his voice had shifted to concern.

"Theoretically speaking," Will began, both of them knowing it was anything but theoretical, "if you were in possession of a car that you needed to get rid of discreetly, how would you go about it?"

There was a pause on the other end of the line, and then, "I'll be there in two hours. Will you be alright until I arrive?"

Will nodded, then remembered that Hannibal couldn't see him. "Uh, yeah. Yeah, of course. You don't have to come all the way out here…"

“Nonsense. It’s getting late, I’ll bring some preparations for dinner.” Hannibal insisted.

Will blinked. “Okay, but just be warned that my kitchen isn’t exactly as big as yours.”

Hannibal laughed, an uncommon but not unwelcome sound. “I *have* been inside your house before, Will. Don’t worry, I’ll bring everything I’ll need.”

Will hesitated. Should he…? Hannibal might be offended if he *didn’t*, at this point. And it would certainly go a long way in gaining his trust, although Will wasn’t exactly certain he wanted to do so. He certainly didn’t plan on turning Hannibal in, anymore.

“Will?” Hannibal’s voice prompted, somehow sensing Will’s indecision even through the phone.

“Bring all the ingredients you want,” Will said after a long moment, “but don’t worry about the meat. I think, uh, I’ve got that part handled.”

And with that, he quickly hung up the call, not wanting to hear Hannibal’s response. This was it. He’d made his decision, and he had chosen Hannibal.

If he was being honest with himself, Will knew that it had been a long time coming.

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Will was still sitting in the barn when he heard Hannibal’s car pull up. It was hard to hear it over the sound of the wind outside, but he still smiled when he heard the quiet hum of the Bentley. Pulling out his phone, he texted Hannibal a quick ‘*in the barn’* and waited for him to join him.

Sure enough, it was only a minute later that the barn doors were cautiously pushed open. Will looked up to see Hannibal standing in the doorway, looking impeccable in one of his three-piece-suits, as he looked over at Will with his trademark lack of expression. Still, Will could see his eyes grow wide as he took in the sight of bloodstains on Will's shirt.

"I take it none of that blood is yours?" He asked politely, moving further into the relative warmth of the barn and shutting the door behind him.

Will shook his head as he stood up, unable to stop a small smile from spreading across his face. "She's over there," he said, gesturing vaguely in the direction of the hanging plastic sheets.

One eyebrow raised, Hannibal made his way over to the sheets. He pushed them aside, stepping through into the grisly scene on the other side. Will followed, watching Hannibal's expression intently.

First, there was surprise. Perhaps he hadn't truly believed, despite all evidence to the contrary, that Will had killed another person. Then there was curiosity- how had Will done it? Had he made her suffer? Then came the pride, quickly joined by pleasure and amusement.

"A columbian necktie for the woman who couldn't keep her mouth shut. Fitting." He commented, giving Will a rare smile. "I take it this wasn't planned?"

Will shook his head, feeling a little bit sheepish now that Hannibal had actually shown up. "She surprised me." He admitted. "Came snooping around the house. I could've stopped her before she got into the barn, but I…"

"But you wanted to do it." Hannibal finished his sentence for him, an uncharacteristic softness in his tone. "You just needed an excuse. You let her find the body on purpose, knowing that you would have to kill her afterwards."

Will nodded, his throat suddenly feeling rather dry. How was Hannibal able to read him this well?

Hannibal surveyed the scene for another moment before nodding decisively. "Right. I hope you don't want to display her? As tempting as that would be, I think it's best that they not realize she's missing, for the time being. You weren't wearing gloves and the chance of them finding forensic evidence is far too high."

Will sighed but nodded. "I didn't exactly have time to put on gloves. It all happened pretty fast."

Hannibal gave him another quick smile. Barely noticeable, just a quick upturn of the lips, but it was enough to ease Will's worries. (And didn't that just say something about him, that Will felt safer in a serial killer's presence than he did in his own mind?)

"No need to worry. As lovely a tableau as she would make, it's not a total loss. Meat is still meat, after all."

Will nodded. "What do you need me to do?"

Hannibal considered it for a moment. "You did fairly well with Randall Tier, but I assume you don't have much knowledge of butchering?"

Will shook his head.

Hannibal nodded, as if he had expected this.

"First, I will move her car. The chances of someone stumbling across it are too high, whereas they would have to enter the barn in order to find the body. It shouldn't take me long."

"I live in the middle of nowhere." Will objected. "My driveway is fairly long, and the closest neighbors are almost a mile away."

“And if Jack Crawford or Alana were to pay an unexpected visit?” Hannibal questioned, arching one eyebrow.

Will flushed slightly, knowing that he should have thought of that himself. “All right. But what are you going to do with it? Forensic evidence…”

Hannibal smiled reassuringly. “I have some supplies in my car for this very purpose. I’ll only be a few minutes with the car, and then we can get started on the body.”

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True to his word, it only took Hannibal about twenty minutes to dispose of the car. Will didn’t ask what he’d done with it; he couldn’t have taken it very far, not if he had to walk back, but Will trusted him to have disposed of it in a way that wouldn’t link it to Will himself.

Hannibal appeared wearing some kind of thick plastic oversuit, his hair held back under a surgical scrub cap. He was also carrying a briefcase, although Will suspected he had only just retrieved this from his car and had not been carrying it the whole time. “I’ve brought you some tools to use.” He announced, setting the briefcase down on the ground next to the body.

Will smiled at him. “For me to use?” He repeated. “Won’t you be helping?”

Hannibal returned the smile, although there was a certain gentleness in his that Will hadn’t expected to see. “Freddie Lounds was your kill, Will.” He said softly. “That means she is yours to butcher, as well. I will, of course, be here to assist should you need it.”

Will nodded, accepting that answer. “Where do I start? I’m assuming it’s different when you’re doing it for meat, as opposed to… well, you know.”

“Grafting it onto cave-bear skeletons?” Hannibal questioned, sounding rather amused. “Yes, quite. You’ll want to start with the butchers’ knife, right about here…”

As Will cut into the flesh of Freddie’s body, he could feel Hannibal’s gaze burning holes in his back. His spine tingled with self-consciousness, but he forced his hand to stay steady as he dragged the knife down Freddie’s chest. Most of her blood had already drained through either her wrists of her throat, but the split flesh left behind his knife was still red.

“Very good. Now, her liver looks very good, so you’ll want to harvest that…”

And so it went, until Will’s arms were absolutely covered in blood and all the available meat had been salvaged from the body. What was left would be almost unrecognizable as Freddie, if not for the signature orange hair. Even that was different, stained a darker red by the dried blood that had soaked it through.

“I don’t suppose you have room in your freezer for all of this?” Hannibal questioned absentmindedly as he finished cleaning off his knives.

Will was taken aback for a moment, but he shook his head. “No. It’s still pretty full of Randall Tier.” He admitted.

Hannibal nodded, considering. “I have plenty of room in my freezers at home, but of course that presents the problem of getting her there. I would have brought some coolers if I had known.”

“I have coolers for my fishing.” Will offered. “I don’t know if they’re big enough for you to take all of this back, but you should be able to fit a reasonable amount.”

“Thank you. It’s still cold enough that the meat won’t go bad out here; we can locate your coolers later, but for now let us cook. You must have worked up quite an appetite.”

Will hadn't even noticed until Hannibal mentioned it, but he was starving. Butchering the body had taken a lot out of him. As if on cue, his stomach rumbled. He did his best not to blush.

"You'll want to take that off before you go outside." Hannibal advised him, gesturing vaguely to Will's torso. "The snow stopped several minutes ago, and a blood trail would be very suspicious."

Will glanced down at himself and sighed. Hannibal was right, he really had made a bit of a mess. "All right." He quickly stripped out of his blood-soaked flannel, shivering as the cool winter air reached his exposed skin. His coat already lay discarded on the barn floor, having been discarded at the start of the butchering.

Hannibal held out a small hand-towel, and Will took it gratefully. He wiped what he could off of his hands and arms, doing his best to be as quick as possible. When he was satisfied he wouldn't drip any blood onto the fresh-fallen snow, he set the washcloth down beside his discarded shirt. Next, Hannibal held out a clean flannel for him; Will put it on dutifully.

It was *freezing* outside. Even with the fresh flannel, the cold seeped deep into his bones. Will hurried over to the house as quickly as he could, scowling at Hannibal as he did so. Couldn't the other man at least have offered a jacket as well? Then Will realized that he was being ridiculous. Hannibal had just driven two hours in the snow to see him, helped him cover up a crime scene, and taught him how to butcher a dead body. And Will was upset about… a jacket? He shook his head, stepping inside his house and sighing as he stepped into the warm air and the scent of dogs.

Hannibal was just behind him, firmly shutting the door to keep out the cold. In his left hand was a large ziploc bag full of… some organ Will couldn't quite name. There had been a lot of ziploc bags, after all, but this one he guessed was some kind of leg meat.

"Do you have any preferences for dinner, Will?" Hannibal asked him politely, setting the bag down on the kitchen counter.

Will shook his head. "Whatever you want to make is fine, thanks. I… do you want help with anything?"

“In that case, I think I’ll make a traditional Mongolian *buuz.* ” Hannibal decided. At Will’s look, he clarified, “Steamed dumplings. It shouldn’t take long, but I suggest you have a shower while I get started.”

Will glanced down at the dried blood that still flecked his hands, then nodded. “Yeah. Thanks.”

He felt a bit awkward taking a shower while Hannibal was in the house. It was just strange, having someone else in the house and not sticking around to supervise them. But this was Hannibal, who had just helped Will cover up a murder and had also seen him shirtless, and Will supposed that leaving him unguarded for a few minutes was hardly the worst crime he had committed today.

He did his best to shove that thought from his mind, stepping under the scalding-hot spray of water and closing his eyes. The monster in him had come out in full-force today, and he had killed a woman. And the worst thing was… he didn’t even mind it. Even now that the moment was over, that he had had hours to sit and think about it and then carve up the body, he genuinely didn’t feel guilty that she was dead. Instead, he felt a sense of calm righteousness, even now that the adrenaline had faded away.

He took his time in the shower, unwilling to step out of the water. Eventually, however, the thought of his dogs entered his mind, and Will decided that maybe he should go rescue Hannibal from the pack of mutts that was almost certainly following him around the kitchen. He sighed, turned off the water, and reached for his towel.

After drying off and getting dressed, Will made his way downstairs. Whatever Hannibal was cooking today- dumplings, he recalled from their earlier conversation- it smelled delicious. He could smell onions and spices and meat cooking. Hannibal looked up as he came down the stairs, giving Will a pleasant smile.

“It’ll only be a few more minutes until dinner. I hope you don’t mind that I took the liberty of feeding your dogs? They looked hungry, so I’m defrosting a few pieces of Randall Tier.”

WIll nodded, accepting that. He usually liked to cook the dogs’ food specially, but he couldn’t complain. One time wouldn’t hurt them, and besides, it was sweet that Hannibal had thought of them at all. “Thanks.” He told him, coming to stand in the kitchen.

“Miss Lounds’s disappearance will be noted within the next few days, and I’m sure it will be brought to Jack’s attention before the end of the week.” Hannibal told him casually, as if he were discussing the weather rather than the person whose remains he was cooking. “I saw you already took care of her phone, and her car will be halfway across the state by now, so we shouldn’t have anything to worry about there. Eventually, however, Jack will question the both of us.”

Will nodded. He had too well-known a dislike for Freddie to be ignored as a suspect. And Hannibal, of course, was currently under suspicion for being the Chesapeake Ripper, so Jack would question him as well. “I’ll need an alibi.” He said. “Not you- That would just make Jack suspect us more.”

“You stay at home on your own every other night; it would be more suspicious to have an alibi only for the night you would have needed one.” Hannibal pointed out. “They have no grounds to suspect you, and they certainly won’t be finding any evidence. Your lack of an alibi is of little consequence.”

Will sighed, then nodded. Hannibal was right, as usual. Before he had a chance to say anything else, Hannibal was turning off the stove and reaching for a ladle. Will fetched two plates from the cabinet, and Hannibal made quick work of plating the dumplings, which came with a side of roasted potatoes. He even added a sprig of parsley as a garnish. All in all, it was probably the simplest thing Will had ever seen the other man make, but the smell wafting up from his plate more than made up for it. It was simply mouthwatering.

“What did you do with the car?” Will asked, settling down in one of the chairs by the table. He took the proffered beer from Hannibal and waited for the other man to sit down.

“I parked it.” Hannibal replied simply.

Will had to fight not to roll his eyes. “And?” He pressed.

“On the back of a car carrier. I also switched the license plate with one of the cars that was supposed to be loaded onto the carrier; it will be at least a week before they notice the deception, and many more before they think to connect it with Miss Lounds’s disappearance. Even when they do, both her car and the original will have moved through several different

distribution centers, and it will be nearly impossible to determine where the switch was made." Hannibal explained, sounding rather pleased with himself.

Will smiled. "God, you're full of yourself." He muttered, but the fondness in his voice clearly offset the rudeness. "This is really good, by the way." He added, gesturing to the food with his fork.

It was more than 'really good.' It was, in fact, absolutely delicious. But then again, everything Hannibal cooked was. Will closed his eyes as he bit into another dumpling, savoring the flavor for as long as he could. He could feel Hannibal watching him, and couldn't help but feel a glimmer of amusement at how much pride he took in his cooking.

"Thank you." Hannibal smiled, before taking a bite of his own potatoes. After he had swallowed, he added, "I'm thinking of holding a dinner party next week. Would you be interested in attending?"

Will's eyes darted to the food on his plate, then back up to Hannibal. "You're going to feed them Freddie?"

Hannibal nodded simply.

Will sighed. "You know I always love to taste your cooking, but I think I'll have to pass. I'm not really the high-society type."

Hannibal's eyes crinkled in amusement. "I can make it something casual." He assured Will. "I was thinking of a small group. Jack, Alana, perhaps the Komedas."

Will considered it. "I'd stay away from Jack." He warned after a long moment. "He's liable to take samples back for testing again- I did a pretty good job of convincing him you were the Ripper, before."

Hannibal nodded, accepting this. "Just you and Alana, then, although three people won't go through nearly as much of the meat."

“Invite whoever you want.” Will sighed. “I’ll still come. I did skip out on the party last time, after all.”

“Are you sure?” Hannibal asked. “I wouldn’t want you to be uncomfortable.”

“Yeah. Just so long as you don’t invite Chilton, I’ll be fine.” Will assured him.

Hannibal nodded. “Is next Thursday suitable for you? I know it’s short notice, but meat is always best when it’s fresh. We can have your appointment while we cook.”

“Next Thursday it is, then.”

# The Dinner Table

Chapter Notes

This is the chapter where the "original characters" tag comes from. I hope they fit!

Also, this chapter includes an autistic character. I myself am not autistic, and neither is my lovely sister/beta reader, so I can't promise that it's perfect. It's a minor character, but if there's anything harmful or misleading about the way I wrote them, please let me know so I can fix it. I promise I won't be upset.

Trigger warning for this chapter: there is a character in this who says some pretty horrible things. It's not a long section, but be warned that there is a woman who says a couple of lines that are very unpleasant about her children, one of whom is autistic.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Of course, Will didn't make it to Thursday without seeing Hannibal. It had only been two days since Freddie's death when Jack called the both of them into his office. Will gave Hannibal a questioning glance as he sat down, and Hannibal nodded almost imperceptibly. *Ah*. She'd been reported missing, then.

"I'll just get right down to business." Jack told them as soon as they were both seated. "Have either of you been in contact with Freddie Lounds recently?"

Will paused a moment, pretending to think, before shaking his head. "No, I haven't seen her around in weeks. I think Alana had an interview with her pretty recently, though."

Jack glanced at Hannibal for confirmation. "No, I haven't spoken with her either." Hannibal agreed.

Will had to smother a laugh, knowing that what Hannibal said was true only in the most technical of senses. He may not have spoken with her, but he had certainly seen her; he had, in fact, sat patiently beside her body and taught Will how to carve her up. Thankfully, Will managed to get his facial expressions under control before Jack could see.

“She was reported missing two hours ago by her elder sister, a Mrs. Claudine Lounds. They were supposed to meet up for breakfast this morning, but Freddie never showed.”

Will frowned. “Do you think she got into some kind of trouble? I mean, she does make a lot of enemies with what she writes.”

Jack studied him for a few seconds before sighing. “I don’t know. Right now, it’s not our jurisdiction. It’s just a missing persons; local police will handle it until they find some evidence that it’s tied to what we do. I just wanted to let the two of you know, since you both have a well-publicized beef with her. If something does come up, it’s entirely possible that suspicion will fall on one of you.”

Beside Will, Hannibal nodded. “Thank you for letting us know. I will, of course, keep an eye out for any sign of her.”

Jack gave them both a suspicious look, his gaze lingering on Will for several seconds, before nodding. With that, they were dismissed, and Will followed Hannibal out into the hall.

“Any word on our dinner plans?” He asked, then frowned to himself at how it sounded.

“Alana has accepted her invitation; unfortunately, my dear friends the Komedas will be out of town until Saturday, so they won’t be able to attend. I do have some ideas as to who will replace them, but nothing concrete yet.”

Will laughed. “Cutting it awfully close, don’t you think? It’s in less than a week.”

Hannibal smiled at him. “My dear Will, everyone wants an invitation to one of my dinner parties. I assure you, we will have no trouble filling the seats.”

Will rolled his eyes. “I hope you’re right. We’ve got a lot of food to get rid of, and I’m sure you’ll be getting your hands on some more soon enough.”

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Thursday night arrived quickly. There were no more murders in the intervening week, or at least none that came to the BAU's attention. Nobody had any updates on the Freddie Lounds case, which was good news for Will and Hannibal. And so, at 7:00 on Thursday night (Hannibal had moved up their appointment time slightly so as to allow more time for dinner) Will found himself standing outside Hannibal's house, wearing a brand-new suit that had mysteriously showed up on his doorstep, and knocked on the door.

Hannibal answered it almost immediately. He was dressed much less formally than usual, the sleeves of his crisp white button-down rolled up to the elbow. "Ah, Will!" He greeted Will pleasantly. "Do come in."

Will stepped inside the house, already smelling the food. It seemed… oddly sweet, somehow. He glanced at Hannibal with a frown. "Dessert?" He guessed.

Hannibal didn't pause as he led the way into his kitchen. "Cannolis." He answered. "I thought we should fry the dough ahead of time, before we start on the main dish. Have you ever made cannoli before?"

Will shook his head. "You know I'm not much of a cook."

"Well, there's plenty of time to change that. I've got the dough prepared over here, we just need to roll it out and mold it into the right shape."

As Hannibal demonstrated how to roll out the dough, Will found his mind wandering. How was it that Hannibal could be so at ease in such different situations? He was just as at home in the kitchen as he had been kneeling over a dead body the previous week. It seemed almost unfair that Hannibal should be brilliant at so many things, and yet Will struggled just to get by.

And another thing on the list of things Hannibal was absurdly good at: teaching. Will found himself almost… *enjoying* himself as he helped Hannibal fry up the shells. It wasn't as hard as he had expected it to be- although, to be fair, his cannolis looked significantly less perfect than Hannibal's- and before he knew it, they had an entire plateful of crisply-fried cannoli shells.

"Now we set these aside to cool," Hannibal instructed, "and start working on the main course. Today we will be preparing a pork chop agrodolce on a bed of fresh spring vegetables…"

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It was just after eight when the first guests arrived. Will heard the doorbell ring once, then again as Hannibal was only halfway out of the kitchen. Although his expression didn't change, Will knew the other man well enough to know that he was annoyed.

"Good evening, and welcome to my humble home." He could hear Hannibal saying from the other room. Will hovered in the entrance to the kitchen, not wanting to interrupt.

From where he was standing, he could see that Hannibal's guest was a woman. She had brown hair, just a shade lighter than Alana's, but cropped above her shoulders. She was wearing a bright red dress and tall heels. In short, just another one of Hannibal's high-society friends.

That is, until he caught a glimpse of her face. Will's entire body froze, struggling to compute the information that was right in front of his eyes. "Ah, there you are, Will!" Hannibal called him over, as though they had not been standing in the same room less than a minute before. "Come and meet my new acquaintance Claudine. Claudine, this is a good friend of mine, Will Graham."

Will could see the moment recognition hit. Her eyes widened in surprise before she managed to school her expression, a too-wide smile tugging at her lips. "Mr Graham!" She greeted him. "My sister wrote about you all the time."

He forced himself to smile in return, although more than anything he just wanted to run. What was Hannibal *thinking* , inviting Freddie Lounds's own sister to dinner? Feeding people human meat was one thing, but feeding her her own sister's flesh? Then again, that was probably the part Hannibal found most entertaining.

"Nice to meet you, Ms. Lounds." He managed to say.

"*Hopper*-Lounds, actually, but please call me Claudine. And these are my lovely daughters, Cassiopeia and Iphigenia."

Will looked behind her to see that the situation was even worse than he'd thought. Standing behind Claudine in the doorway were two girls, both of them with only a passing resemblance to their mother. One looked to be about eighteen- *Abigail's age*, his traitorous mind reminded him- and the other couldn't be older than ten or eleven.

The older girl was scowling at her mother. "*Cassie*." She corrected her, before fixing an apologetic smile on Will and Hannibal. "I'm Cassie, and this is my baby sister Gene. It's a pleasure to meet you."

As Will shook her hand, he couldn't help but cast a quick glance over to Hannibal. To his relief, the other man also looked a bit taken aback; clearly, he hadn't been expecting the children any more than Will had. "Nice to meet you, too." The smile he gave her was genuine, if a bit strained; as irritating as the mother had already proven to be, there was no reason for him to take it out on the children.

Hannibal's voice came from beside him as he, too, shook the hand of the elder daughter. "Hannibal Lecter, a pleasure to make your acquaintance." To Will, he added, "Alana just texted. She's running a few minutes late, but she should be here shortly."

"Excellent!" Claudine beamed, the scarlet of her lipstick cracking as her mouth stretched wide. "I don't suppose you have any wine?"

Will glanced over to Iphigenia awkwardly. "Er, I'm not sure you should-"

“Oh, nonsense!” She cut him off. Will felt, more than saw, Hannibal tensing beside him. He put a hand on Hannibal’s arm, warning him not to attack her. “The girls can handle themselves. And you absolutely *must* show me around this marvellous house of yours!”

Hannibal glanced at Will for confirmation, and Will shook his head slightly. *No, you’re not allowed to kill her.* Although Hannibal couldn’t actually hear his thoughts, he seemed to get the message, and he sighed. “Follow me, if you would, Claudine. I’ll show you to the dining room.”

That left Will alone with the two girls, standing in the entrance hall. He searched around desperately for a safe topic- work, in this case, was certainly off-limits- and came up blank. “So… looking at any colleges?” He asked Cassie, hoping that he’d guessed her age correctly.

Her expression soured, and instantly he knew that he’d picked the wrong topic. Still, there was no going back now.

“I’m actually doing some online classes at Montgomery.” She told him. “I’m just not sure I’m ready to leave home yet.”

Her eyes flickered over to her sister, and Will could understand. He wouldn’t want to leave a little girl alone with that woman for a mother, either.

“We should follow them.” He said, clumsily changing the subject. “It’s a big house, we wouldn’t want to get lost.”

Of course, he had been to Hannibal’s house enough times that he could navigate it blindfolded. But Cassie nodded, accepting his tactic for what it was, and followed him through the house. He noticed that she kept a close eye on her little sister, a softness in her expression that reminded him of someone else. No, he didn’t need to be thinking of her right now.

They had only just entered the dining room when the doorbell rang again. Hannibal practically sprang up, ready to make his escape from conversation with Claudine.

Will laughed. "I'll get it, don't worry. You can stay here and enjoy the company." He said, quickly leaving the room before Hannibal could argue.

(Somehow, after everything he'd done, leaving Hannibal trapped in conversation with a rude housewife seemed like the most evil.)

He opened the door and gave Alana a wide smile. She looked beautiful tonight, dressed in a forest-green suit jacket and black slacks. Still, he didn't feel the pull of attraction towards her that he once had. "Evening, Alana." He greeted her pleasantly.

She blinked in surprise at seeing him there. "Evening. I thought…"

"Thought what?" Will frowned. He and Alana had been such good friends, once. It was only natural that such a friendship would fall apart after he was arrested for murder and she genuinely believed he'd done it, but still. It hurt that she didn't look the slightest bit happy to see him.

"Nothing. I just didn't realize you'd be coming, that's all. Have you been waiting long?"

Will shook his head, stepping aside to let her in. "No, the other guests just arrived a few minutes ago."

She frowned, catching the hidden meaning in his words. "And you? How long have you been here?"

"Will was my sous-chef for the evening." Hannibal's voice came from behind Will. Will hadn't even heard him approach. "Therefore it's only natural that he would arrive early. How are you this evening, Alana?"

“I… good, I’m doing good.” She said, glancing between Hannibal and Will as if she was trying to figure out a puzzle. “Who else was invited for dinner?”

Even Will, who had never had the best social skills, could hear the casual dismissal in her voice. She was only talking to Hannibal; Will’s presence was nothing more than an inconvenience to her. Hannibal’s lips twitched downwards, but only for a moment.

“It’s only a small group with us tonight, I’m afraid.” Hannibal told her smoothly, guiding the two of them further into the house. “The three of us, and the dear Miss Lounds’s sister and nieces.”

Alana hummed in acknowledgement, not sounding at all pleased about this. “No Jack?” she questioned, looking between the two of them again. “Although, I suppose the two of you haven’t been getting along recently.”

This time, her words were directed at Will. He frowned. It was true that Jack hadn’t been as trusting of him lately, not since Freddie had gone missing. Perhaps he was beginning to suspect that Will had changed sides; if so, he would have to do something about that.

“Oh, let’s not talk about work.” Hannibal changed the subject cheerfully, although his eyes told Will that he was troubled by it, too. “Your dinner awaits.”

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Will hadn’t even known Freddie Lounds had a sister before he’d murdered her, but if he’d ever seen Claudine Lounds, he would have known it right away. The two of them were, visually speaking, very alike; although Claudine didn’t have the ginger ringlets of her younger sister, and although her jaw was just a little bit wider, the resemblance was uncanny. Claudine was also just as, if not more annoying than her sister, albeit in an entirely different way.

“More wine, please, Hannibal.” She called, having just finished her third glass.

“Now, now, Claudine.” Hannibal cautioned her, as to Will’s right Cassie buried her head in her hands and groaned. “Perhaps that’s enough wine for tonight. You will want to save some room for dessert, after all. Perhaps a glass of water would suffice?”

Claudine acquiesced grudgingly, accepting the glass of ice water that Hannibal poured for her. At the other end of the table, sitting opposite Hannibal, Alana looked exhausted.

“So, Mrs Lounds, what do you do?” She asked, clearly hoping to find a topic of conversation that Claudine couldn’t find something to complain about.

“That’s *Hopper*-Lounds,” Claudine corrected. “I hyphenate. It’s the only civilized thing to do, really, in my opinion. And I dabble in all sorts of different things.”

“She’s a stay-at-home mom.” Cassie clarified, then added under her breath, “not that she does a good job with it.”

Clearly, she hadn’t been quiet enough. “Well, it’s not as though you two make it easy for me.” She griped. “With your… *proclivities* and Iphigenia being how she is… It’s a wonder I’m still sane, honestly, having to put up with it.”

Around the table, everyone stilled. Claudine didn’t seem to notice, taking another bite of her food without batting an eye. On one side, Hannibal’s entire body was tense, his hands clenching the armrests of his chair; Will had the distinct feeling that he was having to physically restrain himself from attacking the woman. On his other side, Cassie looked stricken, as though she had been physically wounded. Alana just looked shocked and confused.

Iphigenia, sitting next to her mother, was absentmindedly fiddling with the edge of the tablecloth. She was avoiding eye-contact, just like she had for the entire meal, but didn’t seem to notice the sudden tension in the room.

“Mrs Hopper-Lounds,” Hannibal spoke calmly, too calmly. He was only ever at this level of unnatural stillness when he was contemplating murder. “I am going to have to ask you to leave now.”

The glass of water slipped out of her hand, spilling ice-cold liquid all over the tablecloth. Beside her, Iphigenia flinched as some of the water splashed on her thigh. “What?” Claudine asked, sounding genuinely confused.

“You have been unspeakably rude towards myself and my guests all evening, and I have tolerated it, but I will *not* tolerate you saying such things towards your daughters. I want you out of my house right now.”

Claudine stood up, stumbling slightly as she did so. “Fine. Your party was boring anyway. And next time, hire a decent cook.”

And with that, she turned and strode out of the room.

There was a moment of silence before Cassie stood up, biting her lip. She looked over at Hannibal apologetically. “I’m sorry that she…”

“Do not apologize for her.” Hannibal told her softly.

She blinked. “Why not? I thought…"

“Because *you,*” Hannibal explained, “I might be inclined to forgive. And her actions do not deserve my forgiveness.”

“...Thank you.” She said after a moment. “I should probably go…”

“I’ll box you up some cannolis to go.” Hannibal decided, standing up from his own chair.

“You’ll be driving, right?” Alana asked her as Hannibal turned to go to the kitchen. “I think your mother’s had a bit too much to drink tonight.”

Cassie snorted. “Yeah, she always does.” She walked around the table and put her hand on Iphigenia’s shoulder. “Gene? Are you ready to go?”

The little redhead hesitated before nodding in affirmation. “Can… can we come here again?” She asked quietly, so quiet that Will almost couldn’t hear her. “I like it here.”

Cassie hesitated, looking torn. “I don’t know, honey. Come on, Mom’s in the car waiting for us.”

“You’re welcome to come by any time.” Will told her. He wasn’t sure what had come over him, but these girls were stirring up protective instincts in him that he hadn’t felt since Abigail.

Alana looked at him sharply. “I don’t know that you’re really qualified-” she began, but Hannibal’s arrival cut her off.

“Will is, of course, correct.” He offered a small tupperware of cannolis out to Cassie, who took it after only a moment of confusion. “You two are welcome to come back for dinner whenever you would like. I hope you understand that I cannot say the same for your mother.”

Cassie and Iphigenia practically fled the house after that, although Will had a feeling he’d be seeing them again soon. Possibly sooner than he’d like, if Hannibal decided to go after Claudine sooner rather than later. It only took a few minutes after that for Hannibal to get rid of Alana after that, giving her his apologies and another tupperware of cannoli.

Hannibal shut the door behind her and turned to Will, suddenly looking aged beyond his years. “I never thought, when I invited her…” He trailed off, but Will knew what he meant.

“And to say it right in front of her children.” Will agreed, sighing heavily. “I hope they’ll be all right.”

“People like that shouldn’t be allowed to have children.” Hannibal declared darkly. “Have you changed your mind about letting me kill her?”

Will was startled into laughter. “Of course I have. Hell, I’ll even help you do it. But not today- it would be too suspicious, especially so soon after her sister.”

Hannibal was silent.

“Hannibal?”

“She… reminded me, very much, of Mischa.” Hannibal said slowly, choosing his words carefully.

Will’s eyes widened. “Your sister.” Hannibal had mentioned her before, but only in bits and pieces. From what he had gathered, something terrible had happened to her, and it had left deep scars on Hannibal’s soul.

“She was always very quiet. Sometimes she wouldn’t speak a word for weeks. And she was always doing something with her hands- often tapping them, like she was trying to play piano on the table. When I saw Iphigenia today, I just knew… she was like my sister, and then that horrible woman started saying those things and I…”

Will had seen Hannibal emotional before, but never like this, and he was taken aback. He’d wondered, during dinner, how anyone could say something like that to an obviously autistic child. Apparently, Hannibal had been busy imagining his dead sister in her place.

“Cassie reminded me of Abigail.” Will admitted, averting his eyes so he wouldn’t have to see Hannibal’s weakness. If he did, he would never have the strength to say what he needed to.

“I think the two of them would have gotten along very well.” Hannibal agreed quietly.

“And that’s the thing.” Will continued. “I can forgive you for being the Ripper. I can forgive you for what you did to me. For framing me, for letting me think I was going crazy while my brain was on fire. I never thought I would, but I’ve forgiven you for *all* of that. But I can’t… I’ll never forgive you for what you did to Abigail.”

Hannibal said nothing. Will raised his eyes to glare at him.

“I could have forgiven you for *anything*, Hannibal. But you gave me a family and then you took that away, and you did that in the most traumatizing way you could think of. And nothing you say could possibly make that okay. You *killed* her, Hannibal.”

“You… have given me much to think about.”

At that, Will scoffed. “What, not even an apology? God, I never should have come here.”

“I can’t apologize for that, Will.” Hannibal told him softly.

“I should’ve known. And all that stuff about your sister, was that a lie too? Were you just trying to make me pity you so that I’d forget what you’ve done?”

At the mention of his sister, Hannibal went still. “How *dare* you?” He hissed. Then he took a deep breath, visibly forcing himself to relax. “I can’t apologize for Abigail, Will, because I can’t apologize for something I *haven’t done*.”

Will's heart stopped. *Did he mean…? No, he couldn't have.* Abigail was dead, and if Hannibal was trying to lie about that to manipulate him, Will was just about done. "Go to hell, Hannibal." He spat, shoving past the other man and slamming the door behind him.

So focused on the burning rage that coursed through him, Will didn't notice the sound of footsteps on the sidewalk behind him as he stalked to his car. How *dare* Hannibal use Abigail's memory like this? He had no right.

He hadn't even made it around the corner when the chloroform hit.

Chapter End Notes

Ohoho, who's kidnapped our poor Will? Keep reading to find out!

# The Warehouse

Chapter Notes

> This chapter... requires some warnings. This is Hannibal fanfiction, so I think a bit of violence violence is pretty par for the course. But this chapter contains attempted sexual assault of one of the main characters- nothing too graphic, but it's not glossed over either. If you want to skip that section, stop reading right when Will is in the stream with Abigail, and don't start again until Hannibal shows up.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Everything was hazy. Will's mind drifted in and out of consciousness, blurred sights and sounds that seemed to change every time he blinked. There was movement around him, but he couldn't tell how many people. He was- somewhere- the back of a van? His stomach seemed to roll every time they hit a pothole.

He groaned, trying to blink the spots from his eyes. "Dammit, he's awake." A voice seemed to say from very far away.

"Shit. Put him out again." Another voice instructed.

Then there was a hand on his shoulder and a sweet-smelling cloth pressed to his face and Will recoiled, arching his back in an attempt to get away from the drug.

Someone's boot slammed into his stomach, and everything went black again.

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Will regained consciousness slowly.

He was no longer in the van, but a much larger space. It was still dark, but this time he was fairly sure the poor lighting was to blame and not his own drugged-out mind. If he had to guess, he'd say this was some sort of empty warehouse, quite possibly the most cliche of kidnapping destinations. He was tied to a chair, zip-tie tight around his wrists, situated in the center of the cavernous space.

"Hey boss, I think he's waking up!" A voice called from behind him. Will couldn't see who was speaking, but based on the voice he guessed it was a male, early twenties, probably less than 150 lbs. Someone Will could take down, then, if it came to a fight; unfortunately, he doubted he'd be fighting any time soon.

There were footsteps from behind him- heavier ones, not belonging to the one who had spoken- and they slowly circled around to the front of his chair. Will scowled at the man as he entered Will's line of vision. Tall, burly, dressed in all black. Unfortunately, his appearance gave no clues as to who had hired him.

"Welcome back to the world of the living, Mr Graham." His voice was harsh, nasally, and Will fought back a grimace. "I hope my boys didn't hurt you *too* badly, but I'm sure you understand that some things just can't be helped."

Will glowered at him, but said nothing. His stomach still ached where he'd been kicked and the zip-tie around his wrists was digging so deep into his skin that it was starting to bleed. But he wouldn't give this man the satisfaction of telling him that; he could figure it out for himself, if he put in any effort at all.

"Nothing to say?" The man in black asked, sounding rather amused. "All right, then. Makes things easier for us. I would get comfortable if I were you- our employer isn't due to pick you up for another twelve hours."

"Who hired you?" Will questioned, allowing himself to meet the man's gaze.

He laughed. "Well I'm not gonna tell you that, now am I? Come on, you act like this is our first time abducting someone."

But he didn't need to tell Will; his eyes already had. *The employer contacts me on a burner phone. I agree to take you. He wants you unharmed, but I have a very loose interpretation of the word. He knows that you are dangerous, but I do not.*

Will blinked, trying to match the description with anyone who might want him harmed. Mason Verger would never hire someone else to do his dirty work; Hannibal would take offense to the mere suggestion of it. Nobody else that Will knew had a reason to abduct him, unless this was some new killer he hadn't investigated yet? But no, that didn't seem right, either.

But he didn't say any of that. "It's awfully cold in here, isn't it." Will commented blandly. Although he'd been wearing his suit when he was taken, he was not now. His jacket and pants had been removed, leaving him in a wrinkled button-down and boxers. And it *was* cold in there. Abandoned warehouses, apparently, don't have much in the way of central heating systems.

The man snorted. "Is it? I hadn't noticed. Hope you don't mind too much." His tone was sarcastic, and Will sighed. He wouldn't be getting his clothes back, then.

"Not at all." He lied, giving the man a saccharine smile. "Thank you so much for the lovely accommodations, but next time I think I'd prefer somewhere a bit less dark and depressing."

The man's eyes narrowed behind the ski mask. "I'd watch that mouth of yours, boy. Someday it might get you in trouble."

"One could make a pretty convincing argument that I'm *already* in trouble, technically speaking."

That got Will a backhanded slap for his troubles. He grimaced as he tasted blood on the inside of his lip, but said nothing. After a moment, the man walked away and Will was left alone.

Well. Not alone, exactly. There was at least one guard behind him, probably two, and more outside the doors. And Will thought he could see the outline of a camera pinned up in the

corner of the ceiling, keeping a watchful eye on Will despite the fact that he had nowhere to go.

Will lost track of how much time he spent there. It must have been several hours, because at one point they took off his restraints and escorted him to the bathroom. Unfortunately, the man had been telling the truth when he said that this wasn't their first kidnapping. Will had no opportunity for escape, and within a few minutes he was right back where he'd started, zip-tied to the chair.

After a while, he slowly drifted back off to sleep. After all, he wasn't getting out of these restraints any time soon, and he might as well get some rest while he still could.

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Will was brought back into awareness sharply by the sensation of fingernails digging into the flesh of his arm. The man standing in front of him was new. His breath smelled of minty toothpaste and a lingering undercurrent of tobacco; as the combination of smells hit him, Will did his best not to gag.

"This is the guy we're supposed to be watching?" The man asked, the question directed to someone beyond Will's field of vision. "He doesn't look like much."

The other guard, standing behind Will, snorted. "Doesn't act like much, either. He mouthed off a bit when we first got him, but since then he's been quiet."

The man in front of him hummed in consideration. "And you're sure we're not allowed to torture him?" He sounded rather put out by this.

"The boss wants him in one piece. And, speaking of the boss, he also wants proof that we've got him."

Something sailed harmlessly over Will's head. He ducked anyway, instinctively, but it would have been far too late if they'd actually been aiming at him. The man in front of him caught the offending object in one hand. A burner phone, Will recognized, and probably the one they'd been using to contact their employer.

The man flipped open the phone. His hand left Will's arm, leaving harsh red marks where his fingernails had been digging into Will's skin. Now that same hand travelled up to Will's face, gripping his jaw roughly and holding him in place as he snapped a photo with his other hand.

"Be gentle with the merchandise, Marc." The other guard chortled behind him. Will scowled, glaring up at the man with all the energy he could muster. *Marc* . He filed the name away for future reference, sure that if he got out of this alive, Marc had just placed himself at the top of Hannibal's list.

Marc let go of Will's face, pressing a few buttons on the phone before tossing it back to the other guard. "There, sent it. We'd better be getting paid good for this one- I was supposed to be on vacation to Disney World right now."

"You think *that's* bad? I'm missing my daughter's ballet recital for this. She's gonna be mad at me for weeks."

Will rolled his eyes. "If you let me go now, you could probably make it to the recital." He suggested, despite knowing that it was no use. "I wouldn't even hunt you down after, promise."

The men laughed. As Marc quieted down, however, he looked contemplative. "How mad do you think the boss would be if I *did* hurt him?" He asked. "Rough up that pretty little face of his a bit."

"Way I see it, he owes us extra for agreeing to do this on such short notice. If you want to have some fun with him, go ahead. I won't tell."

Will chanced a glance up into Marc's eyes, and he immediately wished he hadn't. There was a distinctly predatory gleam in his eyes, and it took Will a concerted effort not to shiver.

*Focus on what you know.* Will told himself firmly. *There's at least one camera, probably more; they can't hurt me without their employer seeing, and they don't want that. They can't do worse than slap me around a little bit, and even that's risky.*

But, no. That wasn't right. Marc wouldn't have bothered to ask his companion if that was all he planned to do. He certainly hadn't asked about the fingernails digging into his arm or the rough handling of his face when he'd taken the picture.

*He doesn't know about the cameras.* Will could see a gun strapped to Marc's belt, but he wouldn't use it; that wouldn't give him the satisfaction he was looking for. Will wouldn't be surprised if he had a knife as well, although he couldn't see it. And he looked strong enough that he could probably do serious damage with just his bare hands, if he chose to go that route. This… was not looking good for Will.

"You know they're watching you." He warned as Marc took a step closer, invading his personal space. "There's a camera up in that corner. You hurt me and your employer is going to know *all* about it."

Marc didn't answer, but Will could see the easy dismissal in his expression. He didn't believe him, and he didn't care enough to double check.

*Right,* Will thought then, *time to go inside.*

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He was standing knee-deep in the stream, water almost reaching over the top of his waders. The weather was nice, sunny. There was a tug on his line that he almost thought was a fish, but then it vanished and he realized it had just been the current. Beside him, Abigail laughed as she cast out her own line.

“I’ve missed this.” She said. Her dark brown hair looked almost red in the sunlight, tied up in a ponytail that almost covered her scar. “You need to take me fishing more often.”

“I’d love to.” He told her with a smile.

“Have you heard from Hannibal recently?” She asked, reeling in her own line and casting again. “We should take him with us, next time we come out here.”

Will sighed. “I don’t know. Hannibal and I had a fight-”

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And then he was back in the warehouse, jerked wildly back into consciousness by the unpleasant feeling of hands. Hands on his body, hands where they didn’t belong, hands-

Will choked back a scream. Marc was staring at him, a wicked grin on his face as his hands inched higher and higher up Will’s legs. Will could do nothing but stare at him in horror, willing himself not to cry as one hand slipped under the waistband of his boxers.

“I- I wouldn’t do that if I were you.” He warned, hating himself for the way his voice trembled.

The hands stilled as Marc waited for an explanation. Will found himself able to breathe, his voice a little bit stronger as he continued.

“I work for the FBI. I catch serial killers for a living. You really think I won’t be able to track you down when all of this is over? When I get out- and I *will* get out- I’ll be coming after you first.”

Marc barked out a half-laugh at that, but his hands did withdraw from Will's body. "You won't get out." He promised, reaching up to grip Will's jaw the same way he had before. "In a few hours, we hand you over to our employer, and he'll make sure you never see the light of day."

"If that happens, you're in even more trouble than I thought. Because, see, some of those serial killers I chase have gotten rather fond of me. And I don't think you'll like what they'll do to you if I die."

That was completely true. Hannibal was going to kill Marc anyway, when he found out; if Will was dead when he got there, there would be no force in the universe that could stop him from getting his revenge. Not that Will had any particular interest in stopping him.

Unsurprisingly, Marc did not heed his warning. Thankfully, he did not put his hands back where they had been before; instead, he brought his other hand up to grip the back of Will's head with an animal-like ferocity. Their lips slammed together and Will was once more overcome with that sickening mixture of toothpaste and tobacco.

Marc's kiss was harsh, bruising. As he pulled away to breathe, his teeth caught Will's lip between them. Will could feel blood welling up beneath Marc's teeth, and he choked back a cry of pain. Then the pressure was gone, but Marc's mouth was not, and this time a tongue forced its way into Will's mouth.

Of course, he still didn't believe that Will was dangerous. Didn't realize that he had what might be called a killer instinct; or rather, the instinct of a killer. As that second tongue wormed its way past his own, Will bit down, hard. There was a shout of pain. WIll could feel flesh give way beneath his teeth, and he held his ground even as Marc tried to jerk away.

A fist slammed into Will's throat and he reeled back, gasping for air. His teeth, involuntarily, let go of their prey; Marc stumbled backwards, spitting blood from his mouth. "You fucking *bitch*!" He spat.

Behind Will's chair, the other guard only laughed.

A foot lashed out and struck the leg of Will's chair. It toppled over, Will's eyes widening in surprise. He hit the ground hard, feeling something inside his right arm snap at the impact. His head hit the ground, teeth involuntarily scraping his own tongue this time. There was a boot raised above him, coming down towards his head. Time seemed to slow down as Will's head first hit the boot, then the floor below; then, there was nothing but blackness and pain.

***

This time, Will was alone when he woke up. This was a relief, since he didn't particularly desire to be physically assaulted again. He could sense a quiet presence standing near the wall to his back. *Two presences,* he corrected himself. He didn't know how long it had been, but judging by the intense throbbing that seemed to take up his entire skull, he doubted it had been more than a couple of hours.

When he'd first gotten there, the man had told him twelve hours. He estimated that he'd slept for about four, then been unconscious for another two; that left him with another six hours in the warehouse before the mysterious 'employer' came to pick him up. He was only halfway through his time here. Bile rose in his throat at the thought. He wasn't sure he could survive another ten minutes in the same room as Marc, much less six hours.

That was, of course, unless Hannibal got to him first. After all, surely he had noticed by now that Will's car was still parked on the street by his house. He would have been concerned, called Jack, raised the alarm. And if Hannibal knew he was missing, Hannibal would be looking for him- and the Chesapeake Ripper was *very* good at getting what he wanted.

Of course, this all depended on the notion that Hannibal knew he was gone. The last conversation they'd had had been a fight; Hannibal had shared a deeply personal memory about his sister, and Will had responded by throwing it back in his face. *God, I'm such an idiot*. Hannibal probably wouldn't want to talk to him right now, wouldn't bother to notice that Will's car was still sitting vacant on the street corner. And if he did notice, who's to say he would even care? Will had been downright *rude*, after all, and Hannibal was rather well known as being a stickler for manners.

Sometime during these internal deliberations, Will must have shifted in his seat. Only moments later, footsteps were coming around his chair again, and he found himself face-to-face with the last person he wanted to see right now.

Marc leaned over him, a predatory leer on his face. “Welcome back to the world of the living, Mr Graham.”

Will groaned, glaring at Marc as best he could through the pain and fear. “Go to hell.”

The man laughed. “They say the road to hell is paved with good intentions. And I can assure you there is *nothing* good about my intentions towards you.”

“Be careful with him, Marc, you know the boss will be mad.” The other guard warned from behind Will. The voice was different this time, female- there must have been a guard change while Will was out. Still, she sounded bored and disinterested at best. He could expect no help from this newcomer.

Marc sneered, his eyes never leaving Will’s face. “We’ll just tell him he tried to escape. Besides, it’s not like a good beating ever hurt anyone.”

Before Will could even begin to process the absurdity of *that* statement, there were hands on his body again. This time, Marc didn’t take his time with it. One hand grasped roughly at a place Will didn’t want to think about; the other sunk fingernails deep into his thigh. Marc was smart enough to avoid the mouth, this time, but his mouth found its way to Will’s collarbone instead. He bit down, teeth sinking into Will’s flesh as Will cried out in pain.

Marc withdrew from the new wound, watching Will’s face for any sign of pain. Will wasn’t going to give him the satisfaction. Instead, he gathered up what little moisture he could and spat at the other man, a small show of opposition but the only one he was capable of at the moment. Marc’s face drew up in a snarl.

He hit Will hard, smacking him across the face with the base of his palm. The force of it snapped Will’s head to the side, the movement of his teeth reopening the wound on his lip. But he couldn’t bring himself to care about the pain, because at that moment, in the corner of his eye, he saw the most wonderful thing he had ever seen in his life.

Behind Marc, the warehouse door was creaking open. The man who entered was dressed in all black, the same uniform as Will's captors. This didn't, however, prevent Will from recognizing him.

Will grinned, blood trickling down his chin as he met Marc's eyes gleefully. "Oh, somebody's in *trouble*." He teased, feeling nothing but delight at the prospect.

Marc glared at him, discomfited by the sudden change in attitude. "Why the fuck are you smiling?" He demanded.

Will laughed. "Because," he said, his eyes meeting Hannibal's over Marc's shoulder. "My boyfriend is gonna be *mad* at you."

Several things happened at once. Marc spun on his heel, wanting to see what Will was focused on so intently. Hannibal pulled out a gun, aiming it over Will's head. A gunshot rang out from behind him as the other guard realized what was going on. It missed Hannibal by inches. Hannibal's shot, only milliseconds later, did not miss.

Mar was downed moments after, knocked out cold by a strike to the head. And then Hannibal was there, kneeling beside Will, cutting the zip ties off his wrists and speaking to him in low, soft tones of voice.

Will couldn't hear what was being said. Darkness swam at the edges of his vision. Knowing that he was safe now, he allowed himself to pass out.

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Will woke up in the backseat of a car. It took him a moment to recognize it as Hannibal's Bentley, his head still throbbing from how many times he'd been hit. "Hnn'bal?" He mumbled, his mouth not cooperating as he tried to form the word.

Hannibal's voice was warm and soothing as he spoke. "You're safe now, Will, it's all right."

"Wha' happened?"

"How much do you remember?"

*Too much* was the answer. Will didn't say it out loud, but he curled in on himself a little more and couldn't hold back a whimper as he remembered, once again, the feeling of rough hands running over his body.

Hannibal sighed, his eyes meeting Will's in the rearview mirror. "I'm taking you back to my house. I'll have to look over your injuries there; it wouldn't have been safe for us to stay at the warehouse any longer."

"What did you do to them?"

Will was feeling stronger now, more in control of his body. He forced himself to sit up and look out the window. It was still dark. The quickly-moving scenery outside sent a wave of nausea through his body, and he averted his eyes with a groan.

"We're only a few minutes away," Hannibal assured him. "And yes, I killed them, if that's what you're asking."

Will hesitated before asking his next question. "Did you... make it slow?"

Hannibal's face, in the rearview mirror, took on an expression of concern. "Should I have?"

Will was silent.

Hannibal sighed again. "No, unfortunately I did not. I had to use a gun."

Will frowned. "But you hate guns." Hannibal had, on several occasions, expressed his distaste for the weapon. Apparently it 'wasn't intimate enough,' which Will could understand, having experienced the feeling of blood on his hands before. Shooting someone just wasn't the same.

"Yes, well, it would have looked suspicious if the Chesapeake Ripper had come to your rescue. There were cameras set up outside the building. As far as they, and anyone who watches them, are concerned, one of your captors simply had a change of heart and took it upon himself to set you free."

Will nodded in understanding. They were pulling onto Hannibal's street, now, and Will was already looking forward to getting inside and getting cleaned up. "There were cameras inside, too." He warned as Hannibal parked the car.

Hannibal nodded. "I had to destroy them. I couldn't take the risk that one of them had caught my face." There was a pause, and then sheepishly he admitted, "I wasn't as careful as I should have been. Seeing you injured, I…"

Will did not reply as Hannibal opened up the backseat and pulled Will into his arms. He wanted to protest- surely he'd be able to manage walking twenty feet to the door- but already knew Hannibal wouldn't take no for an answer. And besides, he had to admit that it felt nice to be looked after, for once, by the man who had done so much to hurt him.

"Last night… it was last night, wasn't it?... you said something about Abigail." Will remembered as Hannibal carried him up the front steps.

Hannibal was silent. His keys jingled as he turned the lock on the door, somehow managing to open it despite his arms still supporting Will.

"Hannibal?"

“I think this conversation would be better suited to a time when you are more awake and aware.”

Will glowered. “I’m perfectly aware.” Then he paused as Hannibal set him down on the sleek leather sofa. “Actually, I think I might be *too* aware. Got any fancy pain pills for me?”

Hannibal pursed his lips. “Where are you injured? I can see that your arm is fractured, if not broken entirely, not to mention your head…”

Will nodded wearily. “I got hit pretty hard in there. I think I’ve got a concussion. Other than that, I’m not really sure.”

“Yes, clearly. Stay here while I go get my medical kit.”

Hannibal was back only moments later, dabbing at Will’s forehead with a damp cloth. “I’m going to have to take your shirt off to check you for injuries, is that all right?”

Will nodded. “Be careful of my shoulder.” He mumbled. “Pretty sure it’s still bleeding.”

Hannibal finished cleaning off Will’s face and turned to the rest of his body, carefully cutting his shirt away from him with a small pair of scissors. As he peeled the material away from the wound on Will’s collarbone, he sucked in a breath. “Will…”

“To be fair, I did bite him first.”

“And now I find myself concerned as to why his hands were near enough your mouth in the first place.”

Will snorted. “Wasn’t his hand.”

Hannibal's entire body stilled. A quick glance at his face confirmed that he was struggling to maintain his composure, pain written deep in his eyes. Will's eyes widened as he realized the implications of what he'd just said, and he quickly tried to backtrack.

"It wasn't- he didn't- I didn't mean-" Will stammered. He averted his eyes, choosing to focus on the corner of the rug instead of risking another glimpse at Hannibal's face. "It was his tongue. He didn't get any farther than that."

Hannibal took a deep breath before resuming his task, carefully cleaning the bite mark. His touch was gentle, almost apologetic- the exact opposite of the way Marc's hands had felt. Still, Will made a face as Hannibal dabbed his wound with alcohol.

It wasn't until Hannibal had finished bandaging the wound that he finally spoke. "If you say nothing else happened, then I believe you. But I must insist that we get you checked out at the hospital anyway."

Will made a face. "I'd rather not."

Hannibal fixed him with a stern expression. "Will. Judging by the state of your head injuries, you were clearly unconscious for at least some of your time. I trust your judgement, but I would really feel better if you'd go to the hospital regardless."

Will swallowed, his throat suddenly feeling very dry. "Yeah, okay. Can you get me some water?"

Hannibal nodded, standing up to get a glass from the kitchen. While he was gone, Will took a moment to organize his thoughts.

"He wouldn't have uncuffed me from the chair, and he was smart enough not to go near my mouth after he figured out I bite. And I don't think he would have enjoyed it even if he did, if I wasn't awake to… But I'll get tested anyway, if you think I should." Will's voice was quiet as he spoke.

Hannibal nodded again, reaching out to brush a strand of hair out of Will's face. He hesitated for only a moment before speaking. "Would now be a good time to mention that I didn't kill *all* of the men who were guarding you? The one who hit you is currently unconscious in the trunk of my car."

Will couldn't stop himself from tensing at the realization that Marc was still alive. That he could, theoretically, hurt Will again. *No,* he reminded himself, *Hannibal will never let him escape.* And to be perfectly honest, the idea of torturing him to death sounded very therapeutic.

"I'll have to think of what to tell Jack." He changed the subject, not wanting to think about Marc anymore.

"One of your captors decided to get rid of the others and free you; it's impossible to know whether he was unsatisfied by the money, did it out of the kindness of his heart, or had some other reasoning behind his actions. He cut you free before fleeing the scene; when you were physically able, you took the burner phone from one of the guard's pockets and called me. Naturally, I was far too overcome with emotion to think of phoning the police, although I will do so on our way to the hospital. Any questions?"

Will shook his head. "It's a good story. But Jack will know it was you, even if there's no way of proving it."

*He'll think Hannibal saved me because we're working together. Or at least, because Hannibal* thinks *we're working together. And Jack's been suspicious of me already, so this might cement his belief that I'm on Hannibal's side.* This was a problem. *Maybe I can tell him that Hannibal wants me to be indebted to him… yes, Jack might believe that. The less close he thinks we are, the more likely he is to trust me.*

Then Will frowned. Something about this just didn't feel right. "The cameras inside, the guards didn't know about them. If their boss put them there, shouldn't he have told them so they'd know to stay in line?"

Hannibal frowned as well. "That does seem odd." He agreed.

“Unless the cameras weren’t to watch *them*, but to watch for someone else…” Will realized slowly, turning to look at Hannibal with wide eyes. “Shit.”

Hannibal blinked, not quite following this train of thought. “What is it, Will, what have you figured out?”

“They were hired by someone who didn’t want me harmed. Who’s had experience with kidnappers before, or at least knew where to find them. He warned them I was dangerous, but not that you or the FBI might come looking for me... The cameras weren’t there for me, Hannibal. They were there to watch *you*.”

Hannibal’s expression darkened as Will finished speaking. “Jack Crawford.” He summarized. “He knew I would go after you, wanted to get footage of me killing those men so he would finally have his proof.”

Will nodded. “And he- he’s suspicious enough of me that he didn’t warn me beforehand, that he knew there was a chance I would tell you. God, he- doesn’t he realize that if I hadn’t already been on your side, this would have sent me there?”

Hannibal nodded grimly. “After we get you to the hospital,” he said, “I think it’s time we pay Jack Crawford a visit.”

Chapter End Notes

I know my decision to make Jack the bad guy here is a bit controversial. He gets a lot of hate in the fandom that I'm not sure he really deserves. But the fact of the matter is that he *does* desperately want to see Hannibal either dead or behind bars and is willing to break the law to do so. At this point, he strongly suspects that Will has betrayed him for Hannibal (which is true!) and even so, he genuinely didn't expect for the kidnappers to hurt Will. Was it a bad move? Yes. But his motivations were good, even though Will and Hannibal don't see it that way.

# The Office

Chapter Notes

Will and Hannibal get sneaky. Jack is not pleased.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will got out of the car. It was almost eight, and the parking lot at Quantico was slowly filling up with cars. He'd wanted to confront Jack immediately, but it had been nearly five in the morning when they'd left the hospital. Hannibal had insisted that Will get some rest, now that his concussion had been looked after by a doctor, and so he'd slept in one of the guest bedrooms for a couple of hours before he'd been awoken by nightmares.

Now, though, they were here. Other employees shot them strange looks as they made their way to the doors, Will leaning on Hannibal for support as his abused muscles all but begged for him to sit back down. Hannibal had offered to carry him again, but Will had turned him down. He had to show strength in front of his team, in front of Jack specifically.

"Morning, Hannibal- oh *Jesus*, Will." Alana stopped in her tracks, coffee sloshing out of her cup as she took in the sight of Will's injuries. "What *happened*?"

Will scowled, but didn't say anything.

"I'm afraid Will has had a bit of an unpleasant night. I'll explain it to you in more detail later, but right now we have a meeting with Jack Crawford." Hannibal told her, holding Will a little bit closer as he spoke. His muscles were taut; clearly he still remembered her rudeness towards Will the night before, even after everything that had happened since.

Excusing themselves from Alana's company, the two of them made their way to Kade Prurnell's office. Hannibal had phoned her on the drive over and arranged for a meeting, although he had not explained the full extent of the situation.

“Good morning, Mr Graham, Dr Lecter.” She greeted them, sparing only a slight grimace towards Will’s obvious injuries. “Please, come inside.”

Crawford wasn’t there yet. There were three chairs lined up opposite Prurnell’s desk, clearly having been moved there in preparation for this meeting. Hannibal put himself in the middle seat, although not before helping Will into the seat closest to the wall. *Putting himself as a physical barrier between me and Jack*, Will thought to himself amusedly. He wondered if Hannibal was even aware he was even doing it.

“The meeting won’t officially begin until Agent Crawford gets here, but I’d just like to start this out by letting you know that this entire meeting will be recorded and filed for our records.” Prurnell began formally, motioning to a small electronic recorder sitting on the desk. “I understand that talking about what happened might be difficult for you, but you will be required to remain here for the duration of the meeting. Is that clear?”

Will nodded, but did not say anything. Hannibal’s hand reached out to rest on his arm, a gentle reminder that Will was not alone. Will gave him a small smile that quickly disappeared as he heard footsteps approaching the office.

“Director Prurnell.” Jack Crawford greeted her pleasantly. There was nothing in his tone or his posture that indicated he was stressed. A little bit confused about why he had been called here, certainly, but not stressed or guilty. Will’s blood boiled at the realization that Jack didn’t even feel a little bit of guilt about what he’d done. “To what do I owe the pleasure?”

Then his gaze fell on Hannibal and Will, and his step faltered. Will determinedly did not look at him, not wanting to let Jack see his injuries until it would be beneficial for them.

“You tell me, Agent Crawford.” Prurnell did not sound happy. “Take a seat.”

Jack sat down in the chair beside Hannibal, a frown tugging at his lips. “I have no idea.” He lied. “Did something happen?”

Prurnell sighed. “Dr Lecter, you may begin.”

Hannibal straightened up. "Thank you. As you may already be aware, Agent Crawford, a member of your team was kidnapped last night. Although he is now safe and is expected to make a full recovery, I find myself very invested in finding out why exactly he was taken."

An uneasy expression passed over Jack's face, something that didn't go unnoticed by any of the other three people in the room. "Of course, I'll be happy to use my team's resources to figure out who took Mr Graham."

"I never said it was Mr Graham." Hannibal's voice was cold.

Jack was taken aback, but only for a moment. "Well, he's sitting right there, so I think it's a fair assumption."

Prurnell pursed her lips. "I'll admit that I am not fully aware of the circumstances behind this meeting. However, Dr Lecter has indicated that he has certain… suspicions of misconduct in regards to the events of last night. Would you happen to know anything about that, Agent Crawford?"

Jack swallowed. He was starting to get nervous, starting to sweat. But his years at the FBI hadn't left him with nothing, and he managed to keep his composure remarkably well. "No, I have no idea what he could be referring to. I was at home last night, looking after my sick wife."

*Ah, playing the cancer card.* Will thought bitterly. Of course he knew that Jack really loved Bella, but the fact that he was using her to gain sympathy right now did not reflect well on him as a person. *Then again, neither does arranging for me to be kidnapped.*

Hannibal narrowed his eyes slightly, likely noticing the same thing as Will. "Agent Crawford, I have reason to believe that you hired men to kidnap Mr Graham in an effort to entrap me into committing a crime."

Prurnell's eyes widened marginally as the charges were laid out in front of her. "These are serious allegations, Dr Lecter." She cautioned. "What makes you believe Agent Crawford would do such a thing?"

Of course, Hannibal already had an answer ready. "It most likely has something to do with the illegal and invasive investigation he has been conducting under the mistaken belief that I am the Chesapeake Ripper."

At *that* bombshell, Prurnell completely lost her composure. Her face morphed into an expression of shock and it took several seconds before she managed to school it back. "Agent Crawford, what do you have to say in regards to these accusations?"

Crawford hesitated for a moment, glaring at both Will and Hannibal out of the corner of his eye, before he spoke. "Yes, I have been investigating Dr Lecter." He admitted. "However, my investigation has been fully within the law, and I don't appreciate that anyone would suggest otherwise."

Will scoffed. "Oh yeah? Well *I* don't appreciate being kidnapped and tortured, but here we are."

"Will," Hannibal cautioned him gently. Will rolled his eyes, then regretted it as the movement caused his headache to flare up again.

"Could any of you elaborate on this investigation, and why you might feel that it's illegal?"

Crawford opened his mouth to speak, but Hannibal cut him off. "Will, would you like to explain, or shall I?"

Will considered it for a moment. "I guess I probably should. Where do you want me to start?"

"The encephalitis would be a good starting point." Hannibal suggested.

Will nodded. "Okay, so we all know that I was arrested for the Copycat murders a few months ago. At the time, I was suffering from a pretty bad case of encephalitis, which was treated while I was in the BHSCI. Uh, this caused me to have some pretty bad hallucinations, sleepwalking, stuff like that.

This was all true so far. That was easy. Now came the hard part.

"I guess that's when I started thinking that Hannibal was the Ripper. Dr Lecter, I mean. I don't know why I would have thought that, but in my defense I was pretty out of it at the time, and I was lashing out. Even after I got cured, that idea just sort of stuck with me, I guess. When I was released from the BSHCI, Agent Crawford approached me about my suspicions."

Will swallowed.

"Will-" Crawford began, but Prurnell cut him off.

"Let him speak."

"I don't know why he decided to believe the word of someone who was literally insane and hallucinating, but… Crawford was convinced Hannibal was the Ripper, and even when my own conviction started wavering, he convinced me to help him with his investigation. At first, it seemed normal enough… he just wanted me to befriend Hannibal again, get his trust, and see if he'd let something slip. I didn't have a problem with that. But then…

"He started getting more and more demanding. He wanted me to sneak around Hannibal's house, search the basement, bring back samples from every meal so he could test for human DNA. I told him I didn't want to do it, but he was my boss, and he insisted. But when things really went downhill was just after the death of Randall Tier."

"Yes, the man that *you* killed and mutilated." Jack reminded him. Apparently, he'd decided that if he was going down, Will was coming down with him. *Good luck with that*.

Will's brows furrowed in a good approximation of innocent confusion. "But I didn't. You know that."

"Yes, you did. It was *your* idea to use his death as a way to gain Hannibal's trust."

Will ducked his head, avoiding Jack's gaze as if he were overwhelmed by the accusation. "I don't know who killed Randall Tier." He lied. "But when we found the body… when I told Jack it wasn't the Ripper, he wanted to use the death to our advantage. He said it didn't matter if we didn't catch one killer, so long as it got us one step closer to the Chesapeake Ripper." He shook his head, allowing his voice to waver as he spoke. "He told me to take credit for the death, to use it to make Hannibal think I was a killer. That was when I decided I'd had enough.

"I went to Hannibal immediately after that conversation with Jack, and I confessed everything. I knew by then that there was no way Hannibal was the Ripper. It just didn't make sense, and I'd even been with him at the times some of the murders were committed. I told him what Jack was doing, that I was scared to lose my job or be put back in jail. We were planning to report it already, but then…"

He sniffled, and the emotion was real this time. "I'm sorry. Hannibal, can you…?"

"Of course." Hannibal gave him a small, reassuring smile before turning back to Jack and Prurnell. "When Will came to me, I was understandably rather shocked. Over the past week or so since, I've been trying to convince him to make a report to the FBI. I could have done it myself, of course, but I was worried that my concerns would be pushed under the rug if Will wasn't there to testify to it himself."

Prurnell nodded in understanding, although she didn't look pleased. In fact, she didn't look pleased with anything in this conversation, although she was jotting down notes furiously. In the chair beside Hannibal, Crawford looked absolutely sick. Clearly, he'd realized what direction this was heading.

"Last night, I hosted a dinner party at my house. Will was my last guest to leave. I'm ashamed to admit that I didn't even notice his car was left on my street until I received his phone call several hours later… he had been kidnapped just after exiting my house. He called me after one of his captors turned on the others, killing them all and setting him free. I

should have called the police then, of course, but I was in a state of panic. I drove to where Will said he was and brought him back to my own home, where I patched his wounds before taking him the rest of the way to the hospital. That was only a few hours ago." Hannibal spread his hands as if to say, *and here we are* .

Prurnell's brows furrowed and she pursed her lips. "And what makes you believe that Agent Crawford was responsible for this kidnapping?"

"Some of the things they said… I don't know exactly, but I got the feeling that their employer was some kind of law enforcement. And there were cameras inside the warehouse where they kept me, although I think they might have been damaged in the shootout. I think he was hoping for Hannibal to come and rescue me and get footage of him killing those men? I don't know. I guess there's no real proof, but… considering everything else that he's done, I'm sure you can understand why I'm suspicious." Will explained.

"Even if Agent Crawford is not behind the kidnapping," Hannibal jumped back in, "I would still like to press charges for the illegal investigation and his exploitation of Will Graham. But would it be possible for someone to investigate the possibility? Even just a simple search of his office…"

"Of course you can look in my office." Jack told Prurnell, eager to establish himself as a cooperative suspect. "I have nothing to hide. And these accusations against me are completely unfounded and ridiculous."

Will hid a smile. Jack had taken the bait.

He already knew what they would find in Jack's office, after all. Hannibal had done some investigating while Will had his nap. He'd tracked down the burner cell- hidden in the backseat of Jack's car- and moved it to a location more suitable for their purposes. Even a cursory sweep of his office would reveal the hidden phone, complete with a log of phone calls to the kidnapper's cells and the single picture they had sent of Will. In short, it was everything they'd need for a conviction.

Sure enough, as he and Hannibal waited in the hallway several minutes later, they heard Crawford's scream of aggravation.

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“I swear to you, that is not my phone.”

The four of them were back in Prurnell’s office now, except that this time there were several other agents there just waiting for Crawford to make a move. Crawford kept insisting on his innocence, but no one seemed to be buying it.

“It’s covered in your fingerprints.” Prurnell countered. “The text messages match *your* grammar and syntax. It was found in *your* office, hidden in *your* desk drawer.”

“But that’s not even where I left it!” Jack burst out, then froze.

There was a moment of silence, and then Prurnell motioned for one of the agents to step forward. “Jack Crawford, I’ll need to take your badge and gun. You’re under arrest.”

He glowered as he passed the objects over. His hands were cuffed behind his back as he turned to glare at Hannibal and Will. “You planted the phone, didn’t you? Did you do that to his face, too? You and I both know they didn’t hurt him.”

Hannibal’s face grew stony. “Clearly you and I have different meanings of the word ‘hurt’.” He said coolly. “For example, repeatedly drugging someone with chloroform, breaking their arm, and slamming their head so hard against the floor that they’re knocked unconscious. I, personally, would very much classify that as ‘hurt,’ but clearly you don’t agree.”

“You’re the Chesapeake Ripper. You do worse than that every day. Hell, I bet he’s *helped* you do worse than that.”

Hannibal's lips twitched up in a snarl. "And sexual assault, *Mister* Crawford? Do you not consider *that* to fall under the definition of 'hurt'?"

That caught Jack off guard. Of course it did; he'd had no idea what Marc had done to Will. The other wounds were obvious, things he could physically see during their time in the office. Marc's touch was not. "They didn't," he said, but he didn't sound very confident.

Will glared at him venomously. "The bite mark on my shoulder begs to differ."

Jack swallowed, looking almost remorseful for the first time since he'd entered the office that morning. "I didn't know."

"Yeah," Will agreed, "you didn't."

There is a long pause.

"And, if I could just say something." Will continued. "If Hannibal *was* the Chesapeake Ripper- which he's not, don't get me wrong, he's definitely not- but if he *was*, as you seem to believe, what would this have accomplished? Some bad video recordings of him saving my life? If I hadn't already decided to trust him over you, Jack, I definitely would have after this."

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The drive back started in silence. In fact, it wasn't until they drove past Hannibal's usual exit- heading straight on past Baltimore- that either of them spoke.

"Where are we going?" Will asked. Maybe they were headed to Wolf Trap, but wouldn't Hannibal have mentioned that ahead of time?

Hannibal was silent for a moment more, mulling over his words, before he replied. "I seem to recall promising you a discussion about… a mutual acquaintance of ours."

Will's back stiffened as he remembered their words of the night before. "Abigail." He breathed.

Hannibal nodded once. "Yes."

"You… you said you hadn't done it." Will said, licking his chapped lips nervously. "Does that mean she's alive?"

"She is." Hannibal confirmed. "And before you ask, yes, she's safe and happy. I've already let her know we're on our way."

"Why would you lie about it?"

Hannibal sighed. "My darling Will, I never lied to you about Abigail. I merely… didn't correct your assumptions."

Will glowered at him, not impressed.

Hannibal glanced over at him, a hint of what might have been remorse crossing over his face. "I do apologize for making you think you'd killed her. And for many other things I did at that time."

Will snorted. "Yeah, letting me almost die from encephalitis was… not your best moment." Then he hesitated. "Did she… *consent* to the ear thing?"

He nodded, looking weary. "Abigail came to me wanting to fake her death. She was willing to do whatever was necessary in order to do so. Although I will admit that she was… unaware as to what I would do with it."

Will grimaced. Coughing up Abigail's severed ear in his kitchen sink had been particularly traumatizing, even considering everything else that had been going on at the time.

"Why did you keep it a secret for so long? Did you not trust me?" He couldn't keep the hurt out of his voice.

"Betrayal leaves scars on the soul. Can you blame me for being wary? You had every reason to betray me- which, if you'll recall our conversation this morning, you very nearly did."

His grimace deepened. "I confessed, didn't I? I told you everything. Even before Jack did… what he did… I was pretty firmly on your side. Or did you doubt that even after Freddie Lounds?"

That strange expression crossed over Hannibal's face again. Guilt looked so out of place on his normally stony features. "I did not. And I should have told you right away, but… in my defense, I did plan to tell you even before the kidnapping. That's how I noticed you were gone."

Will couldn't be angry, not when Hannibal sounded so damn vulnerable. Still, he raised an eyebrow. "You couldn't just look out your window and see that my car was still there?"

He'd never seen Hannibal blush before, but there was no mistaking the slight flush in his cheeks now. He almost looked… embarrassed?

"I may have driven all the way out to Wolf Trap to speak with you before I realized you were not there. If I had been a little bit more observant, perhaps I could have gotten to the warehouse much sooner."

Will averted his gaze, hearing the hidden meaning behind the words. *If I had been a little bit more observant, I could have stopped them before things got that far*. "It's not your fault," he told Hannibal, and was surprised to find that he meant it.

Hannibal sighed, and Will knew that he was still blaming himself. "You might be interested to know that the house where Abigail is staying has a basement very similar to my own."

It took Will a moment to catch onto his meaning, but when he did, he choked. "He's *still in the trunk*?"

Hannibal nodded simply.

"Hannibal. You *drove to Quantico* with an unconscious man *tied up in your trunk*?"

"Well, it's not like I was going to leave him at my home." Hannibal argued defensively. "Then we would have had to make an extra stop."

Will groaned and rolled his eyes. "Don't even try that. You did it because it was *funny*, didn't you." It wasn't a question.

The corner of Hannibal's lip quirked up in what could almost have been a smile. "Was it?" He asked.

Will couldn't stop himself from smiling. "You know that it was. God, how did nobody *ever* suspect you? You're so fucking *obvious* about it."

"I don't know what you're talking about." Judging by the amusement in his voice, he definitely did.

"I mean, keeping a murder basement in your own house is one thing. But your therapy? Serving organs to the same people who are looking for you? And the *puns*, don't even get me started on the puns."

“Charles Lamb once said that a pun is a noble thing; it fills the mind, it is as perfect as a sonnet.”

“Never much liked sonnets, either.”

Hannibal smiled. “Speaking of things you like,” he changed the subject in a way that should have been clumsy, but instead flowed smoothly. “I think Abigail wasn’t the only thing we needed to discuss.”

Will frowned, trying to figure out what Hannibal meant. “...it wasn’t?” He asked after a long pause, unable to come up with any ideas.

“I seem to remember you saying something very interesting when I found you in the warehouse.”

“...I did? Look, Hannibal, I was pretty out of it. There are a lot of things I don’t remember about last night.”

Hannibal’s gaze darkened at the reminder. For a moment, Will was worried that he would bring up the hospital again- they had both been very relieved by the results of the tests he’d had done, even though Will insisted he’d known the answer beforehand- but he did not. Instead, he simply waited a moment for the anger to pass, adjusted his grip on the steering wheel, and continued speaking.

“I believe you may have referred to me as… how did you put it… oh yes, your *boyfriend*.” There was a mischievous look in Hannibal’s eye as he spoke, and he didn’t sound angry, but Will couldn’t help but flush bright red in mortification.

“I don’t remember that,” he lied, sinking down in his chair and studiously avoiding Hannibal’s gaze. Now that Hannibal had said it, the memory had come rushing back. The dim light of the warehouse, Marc hitting his face, Will grinning up at him with blood stained lips. ‘*My boyfriend is gonna be* mad *at you.’*

“Really?  Because *I* seem to remember it quite well.”  His voice was teasing, and Will’s blush deepened.

“I hate you.”  He grumbled.

“No,” Hannibal disagreed, reaching out to tuck a strand of hair behind Will’s ear.  “I don’t think you do.”

Will remained stubbornly silent.

Hannibal’s features softened into a smile, and there was a glimmer of something not unlike affection in his eyes.  “I find that I’m not opposed to the sentiment, although the term itself is rather juvenile.”

Will froze.  “I… what are you saying?”

“I think perhaps *partners* would be a more apt descriptor.  Or am I misreading your intentions?”

Will scowled.  “I don’t have *intentions*.”  He denied.  “But… I am not opposed to the sentiment either.”  He echoed Hannibal’s words, still avoiding the other man’s eyes.

Hannibal’s hand dropped away from where it had been absentmindedly playing with Will’s curls.  It settled on his shoulder, instead, and Will shifted uncomfortably beneath the touch.  Hannibal retracted his hand immediately, noticing Will’s discomfort, and Will couldn’t help but smile at his thoughtfulness.

“Go to sleep, Will.”  Hannibal told him softly.  “I’ll wake you when we arrive.”

Will wanted to argue, but he *was* exhausted.  “Mmkay.”  He agreed, stifling a yawn as he allowed his eyes to flutter shut.  “And then we can kill him?”

“And then we can *torture* him.” Hannibal corrected gently. “The killing will come later. Much, much later.”

Will hummed in agreement, feeling Hannibal’s hand return to his hair as he curled up in the seat. It should have bothered him, being in so vulnerable a position with a known serial killer, but he couldn’t bring himself to care. And as he drifted off to sleep, Will felt a smile forming on his lips.

Yes, he had definitely made the right choice.

Chapter End Notes

Finished! Thanks to all of you who have stuck with me over this rollercoaster of a week. The adventure may (possibly) continue in a sequel! And by "sequel" I mean "oneshot about Hannigram killing Claudine Lounds and adopting her children" because what else would I mean.

Let me know what you thought in the comments! Also if there's anything in particular you'd like to see in a sequel. Abigail/Cassie is almost a given, but the rest is still very up in the air.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!